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RS-1 REGULATIONS REVIEW:
CRITIQUE OF PROPOSALS, WITH EMPHASIS ON HOUSING RETENTION AND RENOVATIONS

Final Report

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report supplements and critiques the proposals for RS-1 Zoning Bylaw revision put forward under the guidance and direction of the Vancouver Department of Planning.

Our specific mandate has been to consider the potential effect of such revisions upon Vancouver's existing housing stock, specifically as to:

1) How the objectives of ensuring housing and land use flexibility are affected;

2) Possible impact of the proposals on
   a) Neighborhood Character;
   b) Neighborliness;
   c) Housing Choice;
   d) Permit Processing Efficiency.

3) Suggestions for further revisions to the RS-1 Bylaw to ensure a high-quality residential environment.

There is a subtle but real difference between regulations that work well only for new housing design and those that work well to encourage renovation of existing houses. Short-term solutions that principally act to restrict options (in response to neighborhood concerns such as over-bulky new houses) may inadvertantly accelerate the problems they were intended to correct. This has happened under the present Vancouver RS-1 Bylaw: practical renovations have been made nearly impossible to achieve, contributing to pressure to demolish and replace older houses.

The purpose of this report is to call attention to such issues in a way that assists those drafting a new RS-1 Bylaw to improve its effect on renovation options for existing housing.

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- The Vancouver Department of Planning: Director of Planning Mr. Ray Spaxman; Housing Planner, Dr. Ann McAfee; her assistants, Barbara Pettit, Patricia Bourque, and David Wong; Mr. Henry Leung.
- The Vancouver Permits and Licenses Department: Mr. Al Floyd; Sandy Elsworthy.
- The Small-Lot Study Consultants: Mr. Rick Hulbert, MAIBC, and Mr. Brian Palmquist, MAIBC, of The Hulbert Group, Architects.
- The Large-Lot Study Consultant: Mr. James K.M. Cheng, MAIBC, of James K.M. Cheng, Architect.
- Co-Sub-Consultants: Stuart Howard, Architect; Eva Matsuzaki, Architect.
- The many designers, builders, realtors, and homeowners who have contributed their insights to the study.

The opportunity to examine complex issues from fresh perspectives comes rarely. We thank all who have contributed and trust that the collective results will assist the citizens of Vancouver to plan for positive change while preserving those aspects they cherish of Vancouver's residential neighborhoods.

PAUL B. OHANNESIAN, ARCHITECT SEPTEMBER, 1987

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1. AN OVERALL VISION FOR VANCOUVER

Vancouver is now experiencing intense pressure for change to its residential neighborhoods. Increase in population density and a widening variety of culturally-derived expectations for housing are placing stress on the traditional settlement patterns. Under such pressure, the usual human reaction is to resist all change.

But change will occur whether it is welcomed or not. Which changes can be accepted comfortably as an evolution of Vancouver's traditional patterns? An approach to an answer is to examine today's city, both socially and physically:

SOCIAL

Vancouver is a city ...

1) ... where an average family with children can own a home in safe and pleasant surroundings.

2) ... of identifiable neighborhoods and districts. These are the basic stable social units that give Vancouver's residents a sense of place and home.

PHYSICAL

Vancouver is a city ...

3) ... of variety in housing options: various eras, styles, sizes, qualities. A characteristic 'look' exists for each definable district.

4) ... with a lush natural setting of gardens and trees. A balance exists between landscaped outdoor space and the living space inside buildings.

These are facts that make Vancouver what it is, a pleasant and gracious city much valued by its citizens.

Tomorrow's Vancouver must adapt to some major changes, including an aging population's housing needs, increased population density, and new living patterns and expectations brought by new Canadians. The question now facing planners is how to encourage and shape change that is 'friendly' to Vancouver's tradition.

In particular, in moving from today's city to tomorrow's, what should be retained and what should be replaced? Should selected housing retention and renovation be encouraged, and why? Should the city's physical change in the residential neighborhoods be abrupt or evolutionary?

This report suggests that evolutionary change in line with established principles of residential neighborhood design is to be preferred. Where possible and appropriate, retention and renovation of existing housing is a valuable option to keep open. The next section suggests some reasons.

2. REASONS FOR ENCOURAGING HOUSING RENOVATIONS

Should Vancouver's RS-1 regulations encourage retention and renovation of existing housing stock? We suggest that the answer is "Yes." This section puts forward some supporting reasons. The next section reviews the conditions required to make renovation a reasonable choice.

We can relate reasons to encourage renovation of housing to a basic vision of Vancouver, as described on the previous page:

FAMILY-OWNED HOMES IN SAFE AND PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS

A stock of older homes can provide a pool of 'starter' homes for young families. These homes are located in established neighborhoods near amenities and transportation. They satisfy basic family needs for both childless couples and families with children, and can be extended and renovated as the family grows.

SOCIALLY STABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

A 'neighborhood' is something more than a collection of houses: it is a set of relationships between people over a long period of time as well. Stability in these relationships is important to peoples' happiness. Planning policies should favour allowing houses to adapt to changing family needs so that families can remain in neighborhoods rather than uproot and move.

PHYSICAL VARIETY AND CHARACTERISTIC DISTRICT APPEARANCE:

One valued aspect of an older, established city is the visual richness it contains. Memories of past residents are evoked, providing a comforting 'sense of place.' Districts of houses dating from a similar era provide a variety-with-similiarity quality that is harmonious to the eye and pleasant to live with. Sensitive renovations can increase visual richness while adhering to the character of an area.

LANDSCAPED SETTING

Green outdoor space is the greatest amenity Vancouver possesses, yet it is taken mostly for granted. It provides colour, shade, oxygen, water retention in soil, and visual softening of the built environment. Well-landscaped yards are excellent environments for families. Mature landscpe requires decades to grow and minutes to destroy. Policies that encourage retention of landscape are beneficial to present and future city dwellers alike.

To these four vision-related factors, a fifth can be added:

RENOVATIONS INVOLVE GENTLE CHANGE RATHER THAN ABRUPT

All physical change is disruptive and unsettling to residents. The least objectionable change is one that preserves as much as possible of the familiar setting. To ease the effect of change on neighborhoods, renovations should be encouraged where appropriate. Conditions required to signal such appropriateness are discussed in the next section.

3. DYNAMICS FAVORING RENOVATIONS

Although a general case has been made for encouraging housing retention and renovation, individual decisions to retain or replace houses are affected by many factors. The diagram below represents these as a 'target.' The likelihood of a house being retained and renovated improves toward the centre.

ASSUMPTIONS

1) We assume, for the diagram to be valid, that the decision whether to renovate or replace an existing house is made by someone who has lived locally long enough to understand the local 'sense of place': the climate, customs, and characteristic house forms. Without this sense, no incentive exists to consider a house on its particular merits for upgrading.

2) Two of the factors listed are directly subject to Zoning Bylaw control. Thus, changes to the regulations can affect a house's attractiveness for renovations. The other four factors are traditionally outside of Vancouver's regulatory control, but exceptions do or could exist, and some of these are discussed below.

FACTORS SUBJECT TO ZONING BYLAW CONTROL:

1) ABILITY TO CONFORM TO REGULATIONS OF LIVABLE RENOVATIONS:

Principle: The more 'forgiving' the general regulations can be made to be to the forms of existing housing stock, the greater the likelihood that it will be retained and renovated.

Discussion: Existing housing was built under certain regulations affecting floor area, site coverage, height, and setbacks. Regulation changes that appear simple can instantly 'outlaw' thousands of worthy houses and make functional and economic renovations very difficult to achieve. Under the regulations introduced in 1986, many such problems do exists, for example:

- Siting: Non-conformance with yard setbacks can cause trouble with upper-floor additions when physical facts of the lower floors (stairs, plumbing, etc.) conflict with the setback line. As well, additions to non-conforming upper-floor volumes are not possible.

- Height Envelope: Many older houses on basements are too high to fit into the 1986 envelope (21 ft. eave; 30 ft. max.). No useful top-floor space can be developed. On smaller lots, where expansion sideways is not always possible, the only practical expansion direction is up. When this is prevented by regulations, the house is demolished and replaced.

- Actual 'Useful' Floor Area counted in Floor Space Ratio: Older houses contain sizable amounts of 'uninhabitable' floor space: subgrade basements, covered porches and decks, etc. When regulations count this space as floor area, many older homes have little left-over room to add higher-quality floor area. Retention of features that add to the house's appearance, such as front covered verandahs, is discouraged. The total effect is to discourage renovation and encourage replacement.

Conclusion: New regulations must take into account the actual conditions of existing housing if renovation is to be encouraged. Later critiques in this report offer comment on specific proposals from this point of view.

2) EASE OF PERMIT PROCESSING:

Principle: Ease of processing, translated to least possible time, leads to greater likelihood of retention/renovation of houses.

Discussion: Outright-use approvals require a matter of days to obtain, while conditional use or relaxations can take up to 2-3 months to process in some cases. City monitoring reports indicate several areas in which present regulations require complex checking and review. The most pressing area is in building and grade height determinations.

Any new regulations that further complicate the processing of permit applications will act to discourage renovations. Therefore, the Permits and Licenses Department should be given an active role in the formation of changes to the regulations, especially in testing checking procedures for clarity and simplicity.

Conclusion: If tradeoffs between desirable regulation changes and an increase in processing complexity must be made, the probable effect in encouraging or discouraging renovations must be considered.

FACTORS TRADITIONALLY OUTSIDE ZONING REGULATORY CONTROL:

1) OWNERSHIP BY OCCUPANT VS. ABSENTEE OWNERSHIP:

Principle: Normally, only an owner-occupant has an incentive to retain an renovate a house.

Discussion: Exceptions can occur:

a) Renovation-for-Profit of Fine Homes: This can be encouraged through public policy such as Zoning Bylaw relaxations and property tax remissions. To date, the City has recognized and listed potentially eligible structures. This is useful in triggering additional review by planning staff, which can help applicants to earn zoning relaxations favouring retention/renovation. However, safeguards are still required to prevent abuse of this system leading to defeat of its intentions.

b) Renovation for New Use: This new use may include Seniors' Housing, social housing, etc. Present RS-1 conditional use regulations are the public policy tool and should be retained if renovations are to be encouraged.

Despite such exceptions, once a group of houses has become absentee-owned, the usual pattern is demolition and replacement. If a district or group of houses is particularly valued, one possible public policy measure might be a Municipal Development body with power to purchase the property

at fair market value, renovate it, and sell it either on the open market or to a controlled market such as a housing society. Alternatively, attractive incentives might induce private development companies to achieve the same result.

Conclusion: Neighborhood stability and occupant ownership must be encouraged if retention of existing housing stock is to follow. Many implications for muncipal policy and general economic policy flow from this fact, but discussion of them is outside the scope of this report.

2) NEIGHBORHOOD AND DISTRICT PATTERNS OF OWNERSHIP:

Principle: Houses in neighborhoods that are under pressure to densify are at more risk than houses in stable neighborhoods.

Discussion: Many of Vancouver's neighborhoods now experience such pressure. The specific causes are complex and require case-by-case review. Overall, the root cause of today's density pressure is partially brought about by the unusually high percentage (about 70%) of Vancouver's land that is zoned RS-1. The RS-1 Bylaw by itself cannot control such change; the law is either obeyed at cost to the homeowner or openly circumvented (as with illegal suites). This fact suggests several possible public policy actions and predicted results:

a) Rigid Enforcement of RS-1 Bylaw: This is predicted to be politically infeasible and in practice self-defeating, because external pressure will continue to grow and cannot simply be wished away. Existing housing stock which cannot accomodate multi-family use will continue to be demolished and replaced by new houses that are easily (and illegally) convertible to duplexes and triplexes.

b) Selective Rezoning to Multi-Family Use: If enacted by local plebiscite, this measure is predicted to be both politically and practically feasible. It should be noted, though, that in such rezoned districts, the pressure to replace existing houses will be intensified. Only districts that choose to remain RS-1 (and only if it is enforced) will experience a a reduction in pressure to replace existing houses. It can also be predicted that property values in rezoned areas will escalate while values in retained RS-1 areas will appear correspondingly reduced. The potential conflict between preservation of a present neighborhood for its single-family character must be weighed against the possible lost-opportunity property value increase residents would enjoy on selling. If, after further testing, these predictions are found accurate, they should be made clear to any residents who may be asked to vote by plebiscite on a rezoning to higher densities.

c) Creation of a Local-Initiative Mechanism to Preserve Neighborhoods: This would be modeled on present local-initiatives for projects such as

street lighting or paving. In a sense, it would be the reverse of (b), since it would allow a majority of owners on a street to enter into binding covenants with the City to achieve a particular result. Examples would be the control of demolition or renovation of a street of period-style homes, or the preservation of a particular vista. It is predicted that this device would seldom be used but it could enable a neighborhood to act early to forestall outside speculative 'block-busting' and consequent radical changes to existing streetscape.

Conclusion: Presently-stable RS-1 neighborhoods may very likely come under future pressure to densify. The effect on such neighborhoods must be carefully considered before any changes in existing zoning or policy are enacted, lest the result be total destabilization and rapid uncontrollable change in unanticipated directions.

3) VALUE OF EXISTING HOUSE: PHYSICAL CONDITION

Principle: Houses of good basic quality in layout, design, and/or construction are better candidates for renovation than houses of poor quality.

Discussion: This is almost a 'fact of life' statement. However, it has some implications for public policy as well:

a) Houses of exceptional historic and/or aesthetic merit can be recognized as eligible for special handling in the permit review process. This currently occurs with houses on the Heritage Inventory. If well-conceived and administered, such a policy can and does encourage a renovation to a house even in the face of other negative factors. One current problem, however, is that intentional twisting of the policy's intent occurs to obtain, say, a setback relaxation, and the building is then demolished and a new one planned to the relaxed regulation. The policy is thus then counter-productive in encouraging renovation. We suggest that tight control and contact between the Planning and Permits Departments is needed to discourage this practice. As well, there should be written policy, legally enforceable, to deny such applicants a right to apply for a new permit for a stipulated period of meaningful length.

b) With regard to construction quality, an older house frequently fails to conform in one or more respects to the current National Building Code, requiring upgrading that is sometimes prohibitively costsly, or that means destruction of key features that contribute to the building's architectural value. Life safety must always be maintained, but there are often alternatives and close contact between the Planning and Building Departments can help to alleviate pressures that may cause demolition to occur.

Conclusion: Better-quality homes will be favored for renovation, but public policy to provides sufficient incentive can assist to encourage retention/renovation of borderline cases, and should be enacted.

4) VALUE OF EXISTING HOUSE: HOUSE SIZE RELATIVE TO LOT SIZE

Principle: A house that is very small on its lot, regardless of its actual livability, will be disadvantaged for retention/renovation.

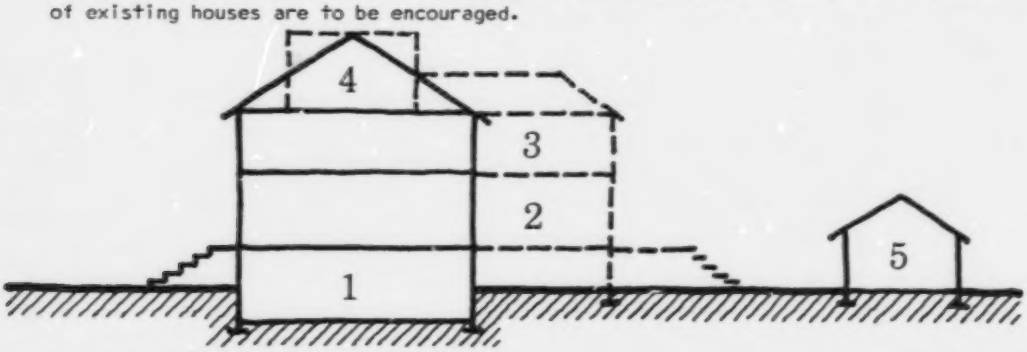
Discussion: This is a finding reported by realtors. There are many smaller homes around the city that have become obsolete in terms of today's living space standards. Frequently such houses were of average quality only originally and are now worn out physically. Although such a house on a very small lot may be renovated, as lot size increases (and the potential development options increase), pressure to replace it becomes heavier. This is a self-evident fact, but the dilemma arises when patterns of ownership are examined. As previously noted, stable owner-occupied neighborhoods may retain such houses so long as the stability exists, but new buyers will purchase them for their development potential and will demolish existing stock.

No simple 'outright use' zoning regulation can equitably both preserve existing very small houses (compared to their lot size) and encourage good new housing. The best that can be done is to design regulations that favour new construction that respects and copies existing patterns of land use and building profiles. In this sense, although the existing buildings might be replaced, the familiar underlying order (and hopefully, some of the mature landscape as well) that makes a neighborhood livable may well survive, and change will be made more gentle for the remaining neighbors to accept.

Conclusion: Very small houses will seldom be kept when incentives to retain them are lacking. However, regulations should certainly favour retaining the essential character of the district if it is to remain residential. This may be the best, and perhaps only, means to allowing Vancouver to grow in population while maintaining its traditional values.

4. COMMON RENOVATION SITUATIONS

This table summarizes the most common renovation situations. RS-1 regulation changes should take account of the factors listed in a positive way if renovations of existing houses are to be encouraged.



AREA AFFECTED	PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS	EFFECT ON LIVABILITY	EFFECT ON NEIGHBORLINESS	SUGGESTED CONTROLS
1. Basement Infill	-May need new outdoor access -Insulate, finish -Sewer connect'n -Light, air -Adequate height	-Reclaims cheap 'found' space -Close relation to ground -Privacy	-Little or no bulk addition -Side entrance may cause noise -Raising house may add bulk	-Allow where practical -Guidelines for side entrances -Bulk controls
2. Main Level Addition	-Need adequate envelope to rear	-Adds a major living space -Good indoor-outdoor use	-May lengthen wall, shadows -May block cross-yard view -Avoids looming bulk	-Allow and control within acceptable 'zone' on lot -Rework accessory bldg. provisions
3. Second Level Addition	-Must tie in to stairs, plumbing -Must work structurally	-Good for extra bedr'ms -Lots of air and light	-Bulk must be 'friendly' -Overlook problems may result	-Allow and control within acceptable 'zone' on lot
4. 'Sky Level' Addition	-Must break through roof -Must tie in to stairs, plumbing -Must work structurally	-Reclaims cheap 'found' space -Sometimes the only place to add new area -Lots of air and light	-Some view block'g -Increase in bulk (but masked by roof forms)	-Allow and control within acceptable 'zone' on lot -Guidelines to give examples of acceptable ways
5. Lane Infill	-Needs adequate site space	-High privacy when within -May offer use that won't fit in main bldg.	-Noise may cause conflict -Controversial to dwell in backyard 'zone' on lot	-Examine and maybe permit habitation in accessory bldgs.
General Remarks	-Must be physically practical	-New space frees pressure on all parts of house -Accomodates family growth	-Retains familiar building and landscape -Retains and adds to house variety	-See Section 3 for factors affecting renovations

5. RENOVATION DIFFICULTIES

The following pages present a sampling of typical problems encountered when designing renovations under the present RS-1 regulations. Examples include:

- 4.3 Height
- 4.4 Front Yard
- 4.6 Rear Yard/Accessory Building
- 4.7 Floor Space Ratio

An April, 1987 Planning Department RS-1 Monitor Report on processing and technical problems reported difficulties in the following areas which affect housing renovations:

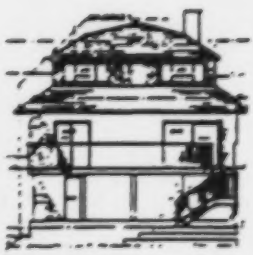
- Many discretionary decisions are required to cope with the nebulous and undefined concept of 'neighborliness.'
- Relaxations can only be granted in cases of site-specific hardships and cannot take into account neighborhood context (for example, a steeply-pitched over-envelope roof is not allowed even in a neighborhood of similar roofs).
- Basement heights to suit Engineering Department's 5-foot sewer depth rule conflict with the RS-1 Bylaw's 21-foot eave height rule. Houses of 2-1/2 storeys on true basements are nearly impossible to build or to extend. The situation especially discriminates against existing housing stock.
- Gables and dormers (common in older houses) penetrate the height envelope and are not permitted.
- Calculation of building heights and grades is overly complex and expensive to implement.
- Floor Space Ratio of existing houses must include all of the basement area. This often prevents appropriate upper floor additions, leading to demolition and replacement by bulkier new houses.

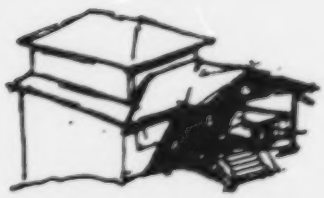
Conclusion:

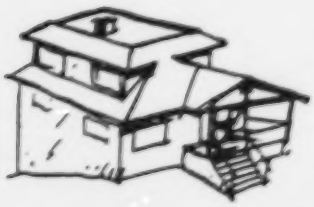
New regulations must address and resolve problems such as these if existing housing is to be preserved. The alternative is the present situation in which many reasonable renovation possibilities are made impossible, thereby encouraging demolition and replacement of houses, with disruption and rapid change in neighborhoods.

5a RESTRICTIVE HEIGHT ENVELOPE

1933 West 37th Avenue Section 4.3: Height







The photograph shows the house as of July 1987; it has not yet been renovated. A Planning Department report describes this case: "Small houses have problems expanding within the envelope. Two designers have tried to enlarge this older bungalow without success. The design above left shows a second-storey addition that conforms to the envelope. However, the owners were unhappy with its appearance and with the way the interior space was affected by conforming to the envelope. They hired a designer to try again, but the second attempt was no better. The hip-roof version (centre) was not given relaxation because, at 36 feet, it exceeded the height limit significantly. Both hipped and flat-roofed versions (above right) break the envelope at 21 feet, but both provide interior space that works."

The conclusion is obvious: although this particular house may survive, many owners, faced with a similar dilemma, would choose to replace the 'unworkable' existing house with a legal new one. The net effect on the neighborhood may well be a negative one.

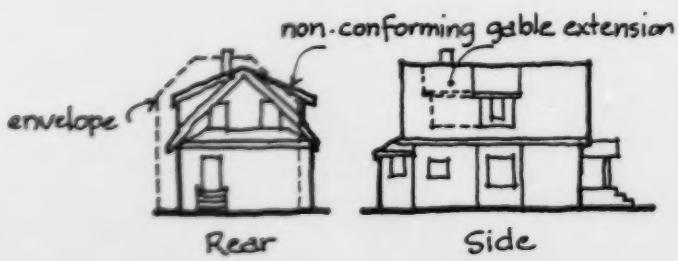
5b SIDE DORMER OUTSIDE THE ENVELOPE

924 East 19th Avenue — Section 4.3: Height

A Planning Department report says that "the owner... has restored this heritage inventory (?) home, and wanted to add dormers to increase bedroom space for his children. Because of the siting on the lot, one dormer was outside the envelope. The heritage group opposed relaxation because the heritage value of the property would be reduced and because the owner had other (more costly) alternatives. This example is useful because his request was for the simplest, least expensive method of adding space; dormers were typically used on older homes to add space, and 'damage' is reversible."

This particular case is troubling because the owners are elderly and too meek to challenge the situation. They report that they will probably have to move. Many older homes are in the hands of elderly folk, and if this type of situation occurs frequently, some of these old houses will inevitably be destroyed, quite needlessly.

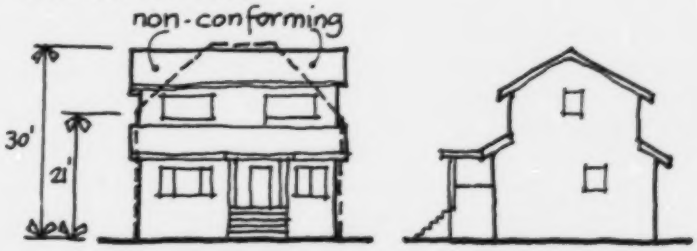
The conclusion is that this case is very common and calls for a new (or return to an older) approach to allowing side dormer construction. If new bulk rules are developed, then the front-to-rear extent of dormers may be regulated to prevent high front and rear walls from being created.



5c GABLE ENDS PROTRUDING THROUGH ENVELOPE

342 West 22nd Avenue Section 4.3: Height

A non-conforming addition to this small house was turned down because the gable ends projected through the envelope. The owner did not want to reproduce the hipped gables of the original house. Special measures were required to obtain approval. The addition has not yet been constructed.



This is a typical case of a side-gable house. Extension at the sides (structural bearing walls) inevitably comes into conflict with the present front-to-rear tubular envelope. The question is: if bulk and shadowing are the concern, and a side-gable-house has its highest point in the center region away from front or rear yards of neighbors, then what is wrong with permitting height in that mid-region?

5d FRONT/REAR DORMER WIDTH RESTRICTED ON NARROW LOTS

3544 West 17th Avenue — Section 4.3: Height

Owing to siting on its 33-foot lot and to owner desires, this two-storey house required a 1/2-storey top floor addition. The owners had purchased the house intentionally for its easy attic renovation potential three years before the RS-1 changes in 1986.

Under the new regulations, the side gables became non-conforming and a restrictive zone was left available for a shed-dormer addition. It was particularly difficult to find height on one side to locate stairs in a stacking arrangement over the existing stairs. On the opposite side, a new 3-piece bathroom had to be wedged into the zone under the existing roof in order to stack over the main bathroom plumbing. Careful design produced an acceptable result, but the owners could not understand why the new portion had to be narrowed in when the existing roof already rose to full ridge height across the entire house width.

5e WIDE DORMER PERMITTED ON WIDE LOTS

2915 West 44th Avenue — Section 4.3: Height

In contrast to the previous example of a dormer addition on a 33-foot lot, this house received a wide dormer because of its location on a wide lot. No problems were encountered in doing so.

The contrast between the two examples points up the dilemma faced by owners on narrow lots: they have nowhere to go but up, but owing to the envelope, they have difficulty. The owners of wider lots have more options to expand out from the main levels of the house, but also have more freedom to go up if they desire. There seems to be a slightly unfair quality to the situation.

A firm conclusion is difficult to reach, but probably a reasonable approach to front and rear dormers on narrow lots will have to begin to take into account the 'bulk' effect such additions produce. Perhaps a preliminary approach to a solution should also take into account the silhouette of the existing roof form; clearly no additional view blockage is created by a dormer that stays within the previous roof outline. Further study is required.

5f FRONT SETBACK PREVENTS BUILDING GRACIOUS ENTRY TRANSITION

3816 West 35th Avenue — Section 4.4: Front Yard

This extensive renovation got caught by the RS-1 bylaw change. It had been designed eight years ago and then put on hold. It faced several problems, including height, but the example raised here has to do with front yard setbacks.

Owing to the front yard averaging rule, the existing front of this house was found to be located on the average line. As a result, no extension forward of that line was permitted for construction of a true front porch, with columns and a meaningful roof. Such transition elements help a great deal to break large forms such as this one down visually and add interest to the street. Instead, a small cantilevered door shelter had to be substituted.

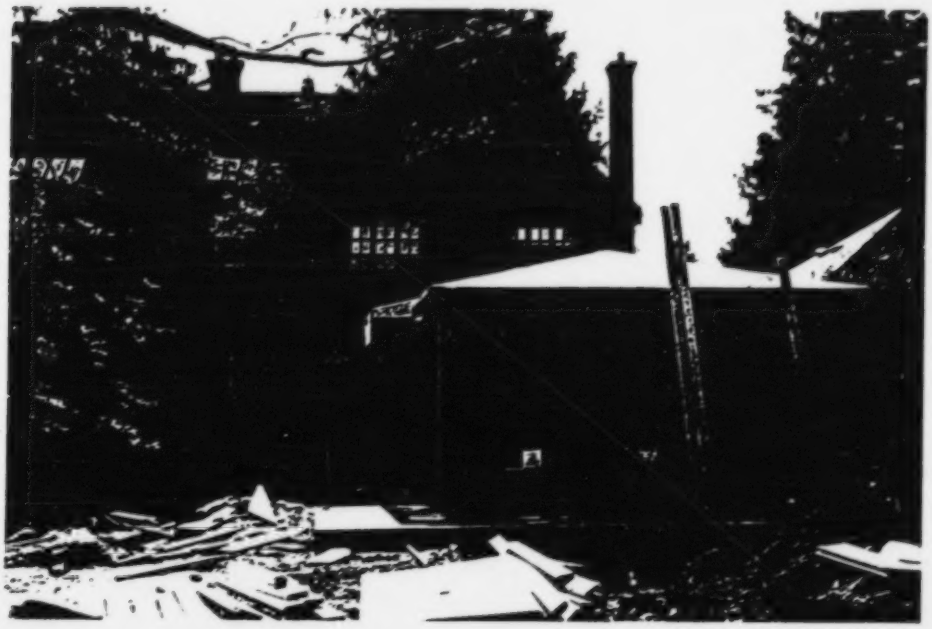
As the architect said, "When you are renovating, the real driver is where the foundation is. If it conflicts with the setbacks, too bad."

As people become more urban, they tend to move closer to the street. Perhaps liberalizing the rules on incursions into the front yard zone would allow a more flexible approach to renovation situations such as this one.

5g ACCESSORY BUILDING/REAR YARD CONFLICT

6842 Adera Street

Section 4.6: Rear Yard



This enclosed swimming pool addition ran into difficulty with the rear yard setback rule. Because portions of the principal building that conform to accessory building regulations may only extend up to 12 feet into the rear yard, the absolute limit on this structure caused a design that allows only an 18" pool deck on two sides, and other anomalies. The addition could not be turned ninety degrees, for it would then have blocked off most of the existing main floor from rear yard access and view.

The architect says that in Kerrisdale there are many short rear yards and that people generally chooose to add onto the rear of the house. It seems reasonable to assume that other similar situations have occurred from time to time. In this particular instance, the extensions' roof height at its eaves matched a property-line hedge and thus produced no additional shadowing or view blockage for the neighbor.

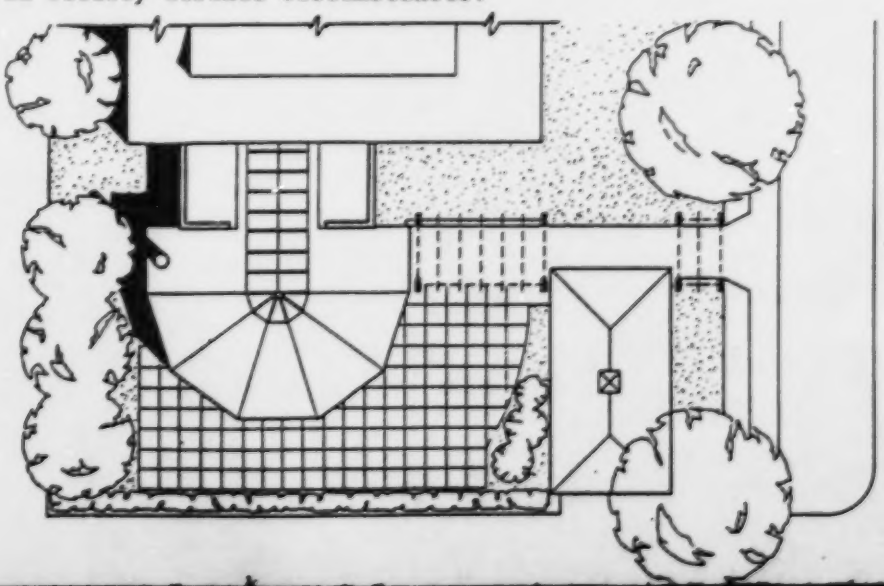
One possible direction to explore would be altering the 12-foot rule, substituting a percentage of the lot length within which an extension could be built over a certain (percentage) width of the lot. See also the next example.

5h ACCESSORY BUILDING/REAR YARD RESOLUTION

4408 West 6th Avenue — Section 4.6: Rear Yard

In contrast with the preceding example, this project is a case of a non-conforming extension into the rear yard that received relaxation because it permitted retention and upgrading of a heritage-designated house. An existing unsympathetic garage wing was removed and replaced by a new detached garage on the other side property line. The new extension creates a flowing internal link between the main floor, six feet above grade, and the new garden patio. The roof massing of the addition together with side wall articulation reduces impact on neighboring property.

This specialized heritage-inventory case could well serve as a model for a revised general policy permitting extension into back yards in clearly defined circumstances.



51 COVERED PORCHES COUNTED AS FLOOR SPACE

156 West 10th Avenue Section 4.7: FSR

Although this house was not the subject of an RS-1 appeal, it exemplifies the situation arising when an existing 'character' house is reviewed for floor space. In this example, the front verandah would be counted. It probably totals about 150 square feet, the equivalent of a new upstairs bedroom.

Section 4.7.3.(a), which counts covered porches and the like as floor area, produces two results:

- Worthy older houses near their maximum FSR when basements and covered porches and decks are counted become impossible to expand and are torn down.
- New houses never receive the benefit of such semi-private outdoor space, and the streetscape loses a potential rich element as well.

There is a strong case to be made for re-examining the desirability of counting such space at full 100% floor area. Perhaps it should be given up as 'free' space up to a % maximum of the permitted FSR, similar to the present 8% deck rule. If a totally free area cannot be given, perhaps a percentage should be allowed free (say, 1/2), although this may not go far enough to encourage new elements in new housing.

Further study is required, and the new concept of 'bulk' determination may play a part. Rather than increasing apparent bulk, elements such as verandahs can potentially mask and visually reduce it.

5j INCLUSION OF BASEMENT AREA IN FSR PREVENTS ADDITIONS ELSEWHERE

General Discussion Section 4.7: FSR

The Problem:

As stated in the April 1987 Planning Department RS-1 report: "The April [1986] amendments to the schedule did not adjust FSR. Nevertheless, in the process of monitoring the regulations we found that many older homes, though apparently small, cannot expand because full basements bring them to maximum floor space. Often, owners of these homes want to add bedroom space on the upper floor, but cannot do so because of floor space limitations. When these homes are surrounded by larger homes with all their floor space above grade, it results in owners demolishing the existing 'small' house."

It's a choice between:

Discussion:

If un-neighborly bulk is the real issue, the sketches show that it is preferable to have a well-designed smaller top floor addition which insets on one or both sides than to have a replacement house without a basement that goes full height over its full width.

Simple arithmetic testing proves that granting 'free' status to some of the basement space would most benefit a house with a full basement. This is the case with many older homes, so a revised policy would reverse the present in-built regulatory discrimination against retention/renovation.

It should be noted that such a change also requires a revision of the eave height limit from the present 21 feet to about 24 feet to permit physical practicality of additions to older homes on basements.

The Small-Lot Consultant has suggested a volumetric approach to this problem rather than a straight floor space tradeoff. See Section 6 for discussion.